

Oregon Technical Advisory Committee Meeting
February 22, 2006

Facilitator: Michelle Richwine

Members Present: **Co-Chairs:** Bob Graham, **NRCS State Conservationist**, and Larry Frey, **FSA State Director**; **NRCS:** Dianne Guidry, Sara Magenheimer, Cec Cullison, Bill White, Todd Peplin, Tom Snyder, Michelle Richwine, Jon Lea; **FSA:** Lois Loop; **Farm Service Agency State Committee:** Sam Asai and Daulton Straus; **Defenders of Wildlife:** Cheryl Hummon; **Oregon Cattlemen's Association:** Kevin Westfall; **Oregon Habitat Joint Venture:** Bruce Taylor; **Oregon Department of Forestry:** Lanny Quackenbush and Mike Barsotti; **The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation:** Mace Vaughan; **Oregon DEQ:** Jordan Palmeri and Koto Kishida; **Oregon Department of Agriculture:** Dave Wilkinson; **Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Holly Michael; **USDA/ARS - Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center:** Dan Long; **US Fish and Wildlife Service:** Lee Folliard and Amy Horstman; **Oregon Wheat Growers League:** Tammy Dennee and Jerry Rietmann; **OSU Cooperative Extension Service:** Bill Braunworth;

Opening Remarks –Michelle Richwine:

- Self-introduction and special thanks to Sam Asai for bringing in the box of Asian Pears for everyone to enjoy.

Larry Frey - Welcomed everyone and gave a quick recap as to where FSA is in the field. In middle of cyclical signup for grain growers and ongoing till June; currently have 50% signed up. Field offices are also in the process of signing people up for CRP and CREP. CRP is new with extensions and rollover. Going through our budget for 2006 which was just received last week and now are trying to catch up. Looks like there will be money for the current staff year and that is a good feeling.

Bob Graham – Thanked Sam for the pear treats from the orchard and everyone for coming, recognizing it is a busy time of the year. The topics are a way of checking out where things are going and making it work in the Ag sector. There has been a lot of discussion about the next Farm Bill. There will be a tighter budget because there will be fewer dollars to hand out. Need to make sure ag is viable while addressing issues on the conservation side and working the balance. Visited the Deschutes Basin recently and it is exciting to see what is going on – pest management in the orchards, effects on water quality, timing of sprays, and high tech innovations that they are using are just a few of the areas. The Extension Service role is very visible in the research; they are working together getting the word out. There was an upbeat attitude of the people that were visited and they are exchanging ideas between each other.

Next meeting date: May 11th - in Aurora.

Oregon Agricultural Water Quality Program – Dave Wilkinson, ODA

The 1993 Oregon legislature passed Senate Bill 1010 authorizing the State Department of Agriculture to develop and implement water quality management plans when required by state or federal law to prevent or control water pollution from agricultural activities or soil erosion. All agricultural lands in Oregon, with minor exceptions, are addressed by one of 39 Agricultural Water Quality Management Area Plans and associated administrative rules. ODA ensures a high level of interagency coordination of services and assistance to landowners striving to meet water quality goals.

Outreach and Education for 2005 included in-ground nurseries and Christmas tree growers; horse keeping operations; BMP effectiveness and general outreach efforts. In 2006, outreach will include a riparian campaign addressing an overview of water quality issues, the functions and management of riparian areas and associated rules, as well as industry-specific fact sheets.

In 2005, compliance guidance was developed, protocols were refined, and case reviews and investigations were conducted. In 2006, ODA will continue to conduct investigations and provide regular updates to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Of the 56 investigations initiated plus follow-ups, 13 are still pending,

- Results:
 - No problems/Letter of Compliance - 18
 - Water Quality Advisory - 19
 - Letter of Warning - 11
 - Notice of Noncompliance - 1
 - Still pending – 13

The 2006 Compliance Plans will include continued investigations and regular updates to Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Water Supply Forecasting and Snow Survey – Jon Lea

The Cooperative Snow Survey Program has been a part of the SCS/NRCS since 1935. The program is celebrating the 100th anniversary this year. Jon gave an overview of the program, an update of current snow pack conditions and a review of stream flow forecasts for the coming spring and summer.

As a Data Collection state, the Oregon NRCS Snow Survey staff is responsible for the operation and maintenance of the SNOTEL sites within this jurisdiction, as well as data collection, coordination of snow survey activities in Oregon and Washington, and quality control of data.

Current Conditions as of February 1, 2006–Oregon Water Supply Outlook Report

- February 1 snow packs ranged between 119 percent of average in the Umatilla Basin and 163 percent of average in the Klamath Basin

- January Precipitation was between 143 percent of average in Lake County and 192 percent of average in the Willamette Basin
- Since the start of the Water Year on October 1, total precipitation ranges from 115 percent of average in the Umatilla Basin to 163 percent of average in the Rogue/Umpqua Basin
- Reservoir storage at the end of January was 1,988,600 acre-feet, representing 106 percent of average and 61 percent of the capacity

NRCS Grants Availability – Dianne Guidry

Information for all three grants is available on the Oregon NRCS website

www.or.nrcs.usda.gov

Conservation Innovation Grant deadline: March 20, 2006

Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative deadline: March 7, 2006 (NRCS State Office); April 7 (NRCS NHQ)

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative deadline: April 3, 2006

Conservation Innovation Grants promote the development and adoption of innovative conservation technologies and approaches; up to \$20 million is available.

The Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) national grant competition fosters conservation partnerships focusing technical and financial resources on conservation priorities in watersheds and air sheds of special significance; up to \$4 million are available for this program.

(GLCI): Approximately \$4.1 million is available for projects to manage or control the spread of invasive species affecting grazing lands under the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative.

All three grants are competed nationally; however CCPI applications must first undergo a state-level review and ranking, with states only able to forward up two proposals under each CCPI component for a national competition. Depending on the number of applications received, OTAC members may be asked to participate in the CCPI application review.

Volunteers for the OTAC Subcommittee on Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative Application Review are:

Lois Loop – FSA

Amy Horstman –USFWS

Bill Braunworth – OSU

Sam Asai – FSA State Committee and Orchardist

Todd Peplin - NRCS

Conservation Reserve Program- Re-enrollments and Extensions – Lois Loop

This program is only for contracts that are expiring in 2007.

FSA has determined that a contract may be re-enrolled or extended based on:

- Environmental Benefits Index factors at the time of the original CRP offer, and
- The land's location within a national conservation priority area.
- To determine contract eligibility, FSA also considered whether the land was located within a national priority area (lands with significant adverse water quality or habitat issues); Oregon does not have any national priority areas.

Contracts by sign-up will be offered in five groups. CRP participants ranking in the top one-fifth of the EBI can re-enroll their land in a new 10-year contract, with one exception - for those lands with restored wetlands, FSA will offer a 15-year contract. The second one-fifth group will be offered a 5-year extension, the third one-fifth will be offered a 4-year extension, the fourth one-fifth will be offered a 3-year extension, and the remaining contracts will be offered a 2-year extension.

Eligible participants may re-enroll or extend all or any portion of their existing CRP contracts, but they may not increase the number of acres under contract.

CRP participants who accept a contract extension will maintain their current rental rates. CRP participants who accept re-enrollments will be paid based on the updated county posted soil rental rates effective at the time a contract was approved, and a

- new conservation plan will be developed. For contract extensions, the existing conservation plan will be used. Regardless of which conservation plan participants take part in, each contract holder must agree to a site visit that verifies the contract is in compliance

Completion date is April 14th for individuals to take the offer and sign up for a site visit.

It was suggested that instead of completing the inspections on the ground, and aerial inspection should be considered. Need to have the inspections completed by September 30th.

Oregon's Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy – Holly Michael, ODFW

All 50 states have developed Conservation Strategies (Wildlife Action Plans) to take a more collaborative, regional approach to conservation of species and habitats, using non-regulatory, voluntary approach. Each Strategy, including Oregon's, identifies species and habitats in greatest need of conservation, as well as limiting factors and research needs. The Strategies also recommend conservation actions to address those factors. Oregon's Strategy discusses several voluntary programs, and highlights the need to work with many partners, such as NRCS, SWCDs, landowners and watershed councils, among others.

This document is called a strategy, not a plan, because its purpose is to help make strategic decisions about wildlife conservation. To that end, the strategy focuses on a suite of species and habitats, many of them closely linked that are in greatest need of conservation attention. It provides guidance on the types of actions most likely to benefit these species and habitats, and a chapter on conservation tools describes a variety of non-regulatory programs that can help landowners and land managers with implementation.

. The Strategy emphasizes being proactive in conservation of declining species and habitats, to reduce the possibility of future federal or state listings. Oregon's strategy has been reviewed by the USFWS, and is likely to be approved within the month. In the mean time, ODFW is building the infrastructure for implementation, and contacting potential participants and partners to look at opportunities for collaboration.

The Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy:

- Emphasizes the goal of maintaining healthy fish and wildlife populations
- Considers the broad range of wildlife and their associated habitats
- Was developed with many partners, and
 - Included extensive public involvement

The Conservation Strategy:

- acknowledges the good work already being done by private landowners, watershed councils, conservation organizations and agencies like the soil and water conservation districts
- is an opportunity to expand the successful voluntary approach of the Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds to maintain and restore upland areas for improved watershed function

The following website provides more information on the Conservation Strategy:

<http://www.dfw.state.or.us/conservationstrategy>

Contract Completion and Energy Incentives (EQIP); Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP); other NRCS Program News

CSP is in its third year and we just started the 2006 program. Two watersheds in Oregon selected are the Upper Grand Ronde and Upper Klamath Lake. Oregon is leading the nation in several of the categories. Oregon is listed high in number of Tier III. CSP in Oregon had a very successful '04 and '05 signup. There are 66 watersheds nationally and limited to two in Oregon because of funding.

EQIP – The EQIP contracts provide incentive payments and cost-shares to implement selected conservation practices. Persons who are engaged in livestock or agricultural production on eligible land may participate in the EQIP program.

In this program we are trying to have everything obligated by the first of June. By middle of March we should know if there is going to be any available funds.

FY 2006 EQIP Energy Conservation Initiative – Provided \$40 million for one-time payment adjustment that will allow eligible EQIP participants to complete conservation practices that have been delayed because of recent increases in energy prices. This is a one time adjustment that applies to participants who signed EQIP contracts in 2004 or earlier. This increase in payment will apply to specific practices that have been most effected by spikes in the cost of concrete, steel, plastic pipe, and other construction materials. The increase will only be paid for practices that are completed between March 1 and June 30, 2006 and will focus on specific practices that have escalated in price by 20 percent or more because of rising energy costs. This applies to regular EQIP projects, Ground and Surface Water Conservation EQIP projects, and Klamath Basin EQIP projects.

Contract Completion Incentive (CCI) –CCI provides financial incentives to participants who have completed all structural practices in their contracts within the

first or second year following contract obligation. Contracts must include at least one structural practice. All structural practices in a contract must be completed by the required date to receive a CCI. Contract must have a minimum financial assistance obligation of \$5000.

Structural practices are practices that involve primarily engineering, construction, or installation of a site specific practice, or involved in the establishment of planting of site specific vegetative.

WREP – Provided an avenue for the NRCS to form special partnerships with others to improve or expand the delivery of WRP, including easements acquisition and activities associate with the wetland restoration, creation, or enhancements. This program may use WREP to obtain assistance with easement management activities from those who have the appropriate expertise as determined by the Chief of NRCS. NRCS estimates the reserved funds, along with contributions from partners, which may result in addressing wetland restoration, creation, enhancement and easement management on approximately 5,000 acres. Proposals are to be submitted in hand by close of business on March 28, 2006.

Public Comment

Lois Loop – Emergency Conservation Program – FSA will have two counties applying for this program because of flooding. Those counties are Jackson/Josephine and Sherman.

Lee Folliard – US Fish and Wildlife service is putting together a workgroup for recommendations for developing 2007 Farm Bill. USFWS's new director, Dave Hall, has this as a high priority on his list. We just received our budget for 2006 and from the additional \$2 million received nationally; Oregon received only \$10,000 more.

Mike Barsotti – Oregon Department of Forestry almost has the GIS layers done. Created a layer where the stewardship plans and farm lands are all on one layer. Still are looking for the outside shape for the property line to complete the layers. NRCS GIS contact is Ian Reid from Oregon.

Kevin Westfall – The Cattlemen's Association is working with ODA on water quality and on new issues dealing with larger animal confined feeding operations. Also closely watching increased ODA fees for transportation, pension, gas pumps, weight scales, and much more.

Bill Braunworth – OSU has had a lack of staffing in the small farm area. We are glad to announce that we have a new person in Benton and Jackson/Josephine areas. Looking forward to promoting appropriate technologies. Also hired an anthropologist for two areas of the state. New hires are the mostly due to retirements; even with these, Extension is still short of staff members.

Dan Long- USDA/ARS's Columbia Plateau Conservation Research Center is using research dollars and working with district conservationists.

Sam Asai – Sam's orchard has signed up in CSP with new practices in November and December. They will no longer burn stumps and pruning cuttings.

Suggested Action: NRCS should create a news release on the CSP process.

Lanny Quackenbush - Working over last year with Dept of Ag on a stewardship agreement program attempting to create a new program linked to the forest practices regulatory program. Working with attorneys on what the benefits could be, as well as

questions on confidentiality, ODF has another forest resource trust which is intended to provide up to 100 percent on non productive land; work is underway to simplify this program. There are dollars available but no one accessing them, even with a lowered buy out rate. This money came from city of Klamath Falls as offset money.

Todd Peplin – New to game and looking forward to being part of this program and . to working with everyone.

Cheryl Hummon – The year-long Oregon Sustainable Agriculture Resource center effort finally produced a written agreement. This Oregon Solutions project's purpose is to create the one stop shopping for producers to access information on regulations, certification programs, web addresses, and other topics. There are 30 public and private entities that have signed the Declaration of Cooperation. Will be looking for funding and the ability to provide some field work as well as increase technical service and reduce complexity. This will be a big effort over the next couple of years.

Bruce Taylor - Joint Venture is working on building a better connection in the sagebrush efforts; there is still lots of interest with agencies and landowners and JV wants to bring them together. There is more conservation work to be done than any of us can do, so want to be more effective and get more partners involved.

Mace Vaughn – The Xerces Society has been engaged in pollinator conservation for a decade and is established as a national leader with experience in invertebrate conservation and community outreach. Also working with the ag pollinator program. First time attending an OTAC meeting and wanted to learn how all these incentive programs work. Interested in talking with folks and getting partnerships established and providing technical support.

Recommendation: For the Xerces Society to give a short presentation at one of the next OTAC meetings.

Larry Frey - Thanked everyone for coming. Acknowledged that it would be beneficial to have all the resources in one place.

Bob Graham - Thanked everyone for taking time out of their busy schedules and attending the meeting. One more thing to think about is precision conservation - looking to where the needs are for investing time and resources to achieve the desired positive cumulative effects.

Meeting adjourned at 3:15pm